

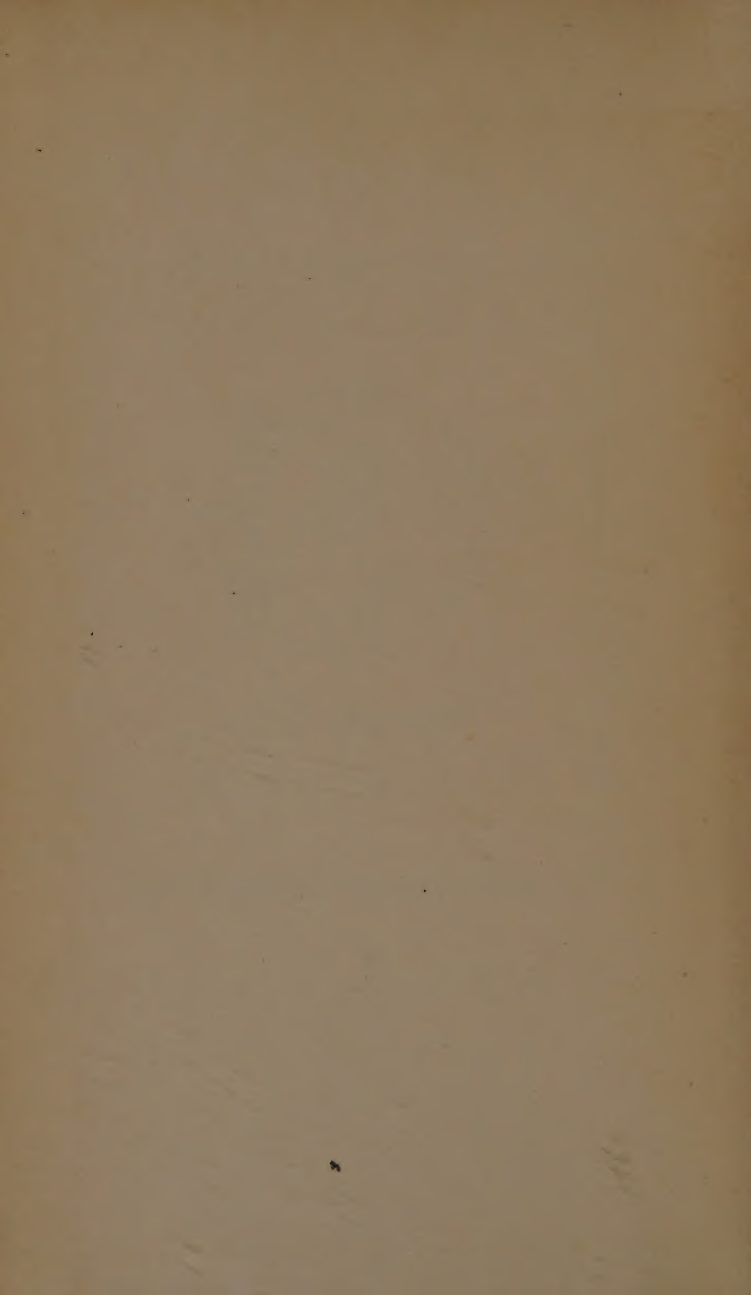


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**ITALIAN SKETCHES**





# **ITALIAN SKETCHES**

**BY**

**SOPHIE JEWETT**

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## FOREWORD

To Miss Jewett's love of Italy and all things Italian many of her poems bear witness, as do the sketches collected in this volume. Miss Katharine Lee Bates, in a memorial sketch in the *Boston Transcript*, says: "Italian art and literature were especially congenial to Miss Jewett, and she spent many months, at one time or another, in journeying among the hill towns of Umbria and the small, out-of-the-way cities of Northern Italy. Her sympathy with the Latin races, in whom, she says, one finds commonly 'the expectant temperament that brings a touch of idealism to all but the abjectest poverty,' is shown very sweetly in a sketch entitled 'The Land of Lady Poverty' (in the *Outlook*, August 26, 1905). Yet she went on these pilgrimages only when in such sore need of rest that she shrank from poetic enterprises, lest her weariness should do her theme dishonor, and wrote what she had strength to write in her firm and sensitive prose, seen at its best in 'The Fate of Francesco' (in *Scribner's*, July, 1905), and in 'The Lover of Trees in Italy' (in *Scribner's*, June, 1903). The element of 'accident, too, entered in. On her last leave of absence she had undertaken to make a translation of De Amicis's 'Cuore,' and her observations of Italian children,

for the purposes of her prefatory sketch, led on to 'Bettina', a true and touching story of a little Italian girl (in *The Churchman*, November 22, 1902) and possibly had some influence in deciding her to write a child's life of St. Francis. This ran as a serial in *The Churchman* (January to April, 1903) under the title of 'God's Troubadour.' Snatches from her Italian letters are significant in more ways than one:

'But the sunset is just as beautiful as if there were no crimes in the world. \* \* Yesterday was a glory, and the sheep and shepherds arrived . \* \* The lambs look like Horace, and Lucretius, and Gray, and 'The Intimations of Immortality,' only I can't understand how any of the poets could take them seriously. They look to me like a comical blunder \* \* I want you to come and play with these ridiculous little lambs and see how pretty the flocks and the sleeping shepherds look in the moonlight. \* \* The grass is full of little pink-tipped daisies, and the woods of rosy cyclamen. It is a beautiful world. \* \* With the sky so blue behind the cypresses, it is easy to be thankful for beauty, and for 'sweet love remembered.' \* \* Tonight we reached Assisi, with a red sunset, and a full moon, and the long blue valley filled with Italian summer haze. I can't bear any more beauty. I want to come home and work hard.'

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IN MEMORIAM: SOPHIE JEWETT

By still lake shore, or oak wood sere,  
One time there walked a lady here  
In garments green, whose ripples still  
Blend with the grass of field and hill.  
Through the dim blue of autumn haze,  
Through quickening spring's enchanted days,  
Erect, serene, she came and went  
On her high task of beauty bent.  
For us who knew, nor can forget,  
The echoes of her laughter yet  
Make sudden music in the halls.  
For aye these academic walls  
Give back that cadenced voice that reads  
Poetic tale of knightly deeds,  
Her head thrown back in swift-born pride  
In one who for his faith had died;  
A sudden splendor in her eyes  
At finding act of sacrifice.

Earth had her merriment and tears,  
Her fine resolve, her quick-stung fears  
Of crawling selfishness and sin,  
Her quicker faith that good shall win.  
This brown world bringing joy and pain  
In days of gold, in lashing rain,  
Through all its myriad-minded strife  
She loved with warmth of human life,  
Revelled in every line and hue  
Of beauty sea and forest knew.

Sharing her sorrow and her mirth,  
We knew her part of blessed earth,  
Yet knew she lived, eternally,  
The soul's hid life one may not see.  
Withdrawn, apart, by night and day,  
Her footsteps climbed the holy way,  
Up heavenly hills of longing, where  
The spirit takes the road of prayer.

Nor dare we doubt that she, who then  
Trod the far world beyond our ken,  
Walks now, unseen, this earth of ours,  
Aware, as once, of sun-touched flowers,  
And hylas' plaintive cries, that bring  
The pain and peace of earliest spring;  
Of June's sweet fragrances, and all  
The subtle loveliness of fall.  
In gentle rain, in brightening air,  
Lo, she is here, and everywhere!  
Nearer than sight, or whispered word,  
Yet ours, though untouched, unheard,  
As eager as of old to share  
The beauty that one may not bear,  
So fine its poignancy of joy;  
Still busy in her old employ  
Of poetry, verse finely wrought  
That sets to music noble thought.



One had to seek her then, but see!  
Forever waits she silently  
Where bitter need or trouble calls.  
Alway I hear her light foot-falls  
In crowded streets, where hunger waits  
At its unnumbered, swarming gates;  
And step by step with human ill  
Her healing footsteps follow still.  
Whenever sudden anguish cries  
I see the sweetness of her eyes,  
Where quivering shades of sorrow blend  
With vision of the perfect end.

MARGARET SHERWOOD



## THE LAND OF LADY POVERTY

In the midsummer days it was easy to fall in love with her. Did she not masquerade as Lady Beauty and as Lady Pleasure? Her children came singing out of the Lombard fields at evening, carrying bundles of hay on their dark heads. They stripped the mulberry leaves in the vineyards, or set the first sickles into tall, feathery hemp; they dangled at the window of our railway carriage, offering us great purple figs bursting with sweetness.

Though at moments greed and squalor might beset us, for the most part our dream held the spell of beauty that surrounds the simplest and most universal of human labors. Through it we saw brown peasants who bent among wheat and poppies, and in purple fields of "Spanish grass;" who trudged behind white oxen, following antique plows into a Virgilian twilight. To that dream of the beauty of simple toil belongs imperishably a girl drawing water at a Tuscan fountain. Some hint of ancient grace clung to the profile outlined against the stone, even to the straw-covered Chianti flask in her hand and to the gleaming copper jar on the fountain ledge beside her.

To the dream belonged also dark boatmen of

the Adriatic, hoisting sails of yellow and brown and scarlet to set forth on an unearthly sea that lay in long level bars of vivid color, gold and purple, green and blue. All day the bright wings floated over the bright water, veering and tacking to a stiff land breeze—common fishing-boats in search of their scant and perilous harvest; but that thought could not penetrate our dream.

The chaffer of an Umbrian market-place on the day of a country fair awakened us, yet the reality was gay enough and not unpicturesque, even though a passion for cheap finery often marred the charm of booths and of buyers. Fashion had not affected the vine-covered baskets of the fruit-vendors nor the shining ranks of majolica set out on the pavement in the sun; and the cattle fair almost brought back the illusion. There was enduring fascination in the great oxen, white, with a faint tint of pink. Standing sleek and garlanded in a noisy, commonplace crowd of barterers and onlookers, they seemed incongruously beautiful, as if strayed from some sacrificial procession.

At morning we looked down upon a broad *piazza d'armi* so crowded with the huge creatures that it seemed like a white sea; and in the light of afternoon we watched them trailing homeward in long lines, visible on loop after loop of the climbing roads, like the train of the Magi in a fifteenth-century painting.

Wherever labor led to social gathering even the poorest seemed happy. The daily drawing of water at the village fountain was merrier than afternoon tea, and as noisy. Veriest hags, sibylline in their wrinkled blackness, laughed and chattered, exchanging incomprehensible gossip that piqued one's curiosity. We grew to love the daily greetings that we watched and that we received. Millet might have painted the two burden-bearing women lingering to chat on the sharp curve of an Assisan road; and the smile of another, returning homeward with her empty basket, rewarded us for a long walk across the sun-steeped plain. Moreover, there was no day that did not add to our friendships among children, and, it must be confessed, among animals. We noticed that care and caresses seemed to be divided evenly between the children and the beasts. One woman's pride in an obstreperous donkey was fairly maternal, and a snowy-haired grandmother tended impartially her little grandson and a ubiquitous lamb.

Away from the noise and merriment of market-place and fountain, the lives of the people seemed strangely barren and lonely. In the mountain districts the same lament sounded everywhere. The hostesses of forlorn little inns chanted it; the coachmen as they walked beside our carriage on the steep roads; even the pretty girl who conducted us through the chapel and

garden of an abandoned monastery: "There is no work, *Signore*; there are no factories; all the young people are gone to France to spin silk." And, in truth, through the poorest regions, we saw more old folk and children than youths and maidens. All day long the single pig, whose fat sides shine with a dark luster like that of pewter, is watched by an old crone, or, it may be, by a tiny girl who reminds one of Mathilde Serao's Canituccia guarding her beloved Ciccotto. Aged men and women, too, trim the vineyards, dig in the fields, or stagger down the mountain paths bent double under heavy fagots.

The loneliness of certain individuals of a race so gregarious was peculiarly impressive. To the woman with her pig, to shepherd or goatherd, brute companionship may have atoned for lack of human kind; and yet an unfailing readiness to talk suggested wistful desire for reciprocal speech. Even the strange, savage creature—girl or woman, one could not tell—who pastured goats in the shadow of a ruined Tuscan fortress, was pathetic in her eagerness for conversation. She showed none of the intelligent curiosity that often met us. I do not remember that she asked a question; but she chattered like a child, as she sewed a bright piece of cotton upon a faded garment already patched with half a dozen different colors. She had not rested after midnight, for fear of oversleeping; she had risen at four

o'clock to go to the mountain for fagots; the distance was nine miles, and she had brought back her load before midday. "Was the road hard?" "Yes, very hard, and the wood is heavy." There was a kind of dull pride in her voice. The goats browsed between the fallen stones of the mediaeval tower; in a cypress-shaded convent garden on the slope below, an old monk watered his flowers; far beneath, on the plain, Lake Trasimene shone through the August haze, light blue, as Fra Angelico saw it, and Signorelli. We left the girl standing among her goats, sharply outlined against the sky—a thing not ancient nor mediaeval nor modern, only a dateless symbol of lonely human toil.

One finds commonly among Latin races the expectant temperament that brings a touch of idealism to all but the abjectest poverty. At the worst, there is a vague belief in luck, or in the intervention of the saints. This expectation, pale or vivid, of some sudden bettering of things appeared to thrive chiefly upon the possibilities offered by the government lottery, by religion, by emigration, and by socialism. Though we heard of marked exceptions, we sometimes fancied that in the remoter districts *socialismo* was still, for the most part, the mere word of the conjuror, connoting dim images of things to be desired, or of things to be feared. Social discontent there was, and criticism of landowners and of the

government, yet the ideas of even the critics seemed often fixedly feudal.

The word America was more concretely yet scarcely more clearly suggestive. Everywhere in the mountains we encountered a terrified curiosity as to what the American voyage might be like, except, perhaps, among the peasants about Urbino, in whose vocabulary *francese* seemed to be synonymous with foreigner, and *La Francia* the outpost of the world.

One soon becomes accustomed to hearing the government lottery defended upon grounds of expediency or of necessity; but to hear a grave *commendatore* champion it as a source of inspiration and uplifting to the people struck with ironic sound on Anglo-Saxon ears. "If you take away the lottery, you take away that which idealizes the lives of the very poor. It gives hope and zest to the most miserable creature on the street to think that some day he may play the lucky number and never go hungry any more." And this opinion was maintained along with the admission that in northern Italy, where there is the greatest prosperity, the lottery has least hold upon the populace.

A man may find no place in the ranks of paid labor; fortune may play him false in his dream of *L'America* or of *il lotto*; but the church is literally an open refuge, day by day, to the most wretched. One enters cathedral or *piève* to



look at a fresco or mosaic, to witness a great ceremonial, to listen to music, or, it may be, to say one's prayers, but one lingers to watch the daily pathos of simple lives. After the first morning, when you have made acquaintance with the sacristan and the parish priest, nobody molests you except in the way of friendly conversation. You may sit in the choir stalls and copy a bit of fresco, or, if the face you wish to paint happen to be in the vestry, and out of reach on a dark stretch of wall, some one will bring the steps that are used for lighting the high altar, and you may mount thereon and work for hours. Various ecclesiastics gather about you as they go and come from mass, and talk with you while they put off their gorgeous vestments. They do not resent your intrusion, but, on the contrary, they are pleased that you have sought out the quaint and faded masterpiece of their own local painter, though they evidently marvel at your peculiar taste in art. Is there not, in a chapel of the nave, a Madonna by Baroccio, "*ma bellissima!*" and a *Gesù Bambino* in the *palazzo ducale* that "actually sleeps, *proprio dorme*, Signora?"

It is better to be the idle comrade of the copyist, so to watch unhindered the life that comes and goes under the leathern curtain of the great door. A familiar, intimate life is this that enters. Even the children are at home, and play about unreprieved and unawed. I watched one

day, in an almost empty cathedral, at the hour of mass, a stray baby, who came pattering up the nave and planted himself exactly in the path of the priestly procession. A tall deacon lifted him gently from under the feet of the officiating priest, and during the celebration the little fellow climbed upon the chancel rail, until weariness overcame his interest, and he serenely went to sleep upon the highest step. He still slept there when the function ended and the vast nave was empty, save for one cripple kneeling at his prayers.

When the leather curtain rose again, it admitted two women, one a robust, bright-faced *popolana*, the other a shriveled, tiny old creature with the vague eyes and smile of the feeble-minded. They went from altar to altar, and the younger woman made the unfortunate kneel as if she were a little child, and I heard the murmur of sacred words across an inarticulate babble, pitifully unchildlike. When the prayers were ended, the two came up to me, and the younger woman explained gently, "She has no mind, Signora, she cannot talk; but she is so good, and so happy, *poverina!*" and she kissed and caressed the vacant, smiling face. A cripple, an imbecile, a sleeping baby—on these *pecorelli* the great Christ above the altar looked down sorrowfully.

In the country of St. Francis a persistent tradition of sacredness clings about the mendi-

cant. In certain cities one may substitute food tickets, *buoni*, for coppers, and otherwise second public and private effort to combat pauperism, but in remote places one cannot sleep o' nights without the good-will of the beggars. However shamefacedly, one comes to adopt a mediaeval standard, quieting one's scruples by observing that begging is not always the only trade of a given individual. Children rattle tambourines or turn handsprings by way of earning their *soldi*, and old women drop their knitting to stretch out hands misshapen with long toil that has led only to beggary at the end. Maria della Rocca, said to have one hundred years, and looking her age, walks in the early morning from the mountain, five miles away, carrying on her erect old head a wide basket filled with mushrooms. After making her bargain in the kitchen, she lingers before the house for whatever coppers may fall from the windows. Now Maria's tongue is like that of the prophet Balaam, eloquent for blessing or cursing, and, if you please her, she will fall upon her stiff knees and call down upon your unworthy head the good offices of half a hundred saints. If you offend her—but only the intrepid would dare to test those powers of vituperation.

There is also Fra Felice, trudging cheerily through the chestnut woods, or, on a long day's expedition, riding the sole horse of the brotherhood. May not that kindly face reflect some

faint halo from the spirit of the Poverello? At any rate, he brings *erbe* for your garden, and his blessing is in the name of St. Francis. At the day's end you are glad to see him come home with well-filled bag, and you watch the white road dreamily as he fades into the dimness of the twilight and of the thirteenth century.

Our summer wanderings never led us "*giu per lo mondo senza fine amaro*" of the squalidest city streets and the deadliest industries, yet even in Umbria and the marches, the land of her old-time worship, My Lady Poverty began to appear to us haggard and tattered and unlovely. Her servants, the toilers as well as the beggars, often went ragged and hungry; for the line between self-support and beggary was impossible to draw, and earning a living meant simply not starving. Being sufficiently fed and clad was construed as possessing wealth; and never have I seen more pitiful, patient, unrewarded toil than among this race so constantly misrepresented as lazy. The hollow-eyed, filthy women and children outside the gates of Gubbio were not beggars, but simply *poveri*. In one little mountain city, proud of electric light and railroad, but without water and without industry, we used to wonder how the people lived who did not beg, and, indeed, how the beggars found patrons, where all seemed so poor. A ducal palace, beautiful with the charm of the early Renaissance, came to be scant

consolation for the wretchedness that haunted us through every street. Some day, perhaps, water will be brought from the mountains, and cleanliness and prosperous labor may come with it, but in the meantime there seems no future for the young except emigration—and for the old? On a neighboring hilltop stands a low, white monastic house which we visited one day, drawn thither by the picturesqueness of its cypress avenues and its open belfry. "It has been made a *recovero dei poveri*," our coachman explained, "an almshouse." A white-headed man was weeding the pavement between the cypresses, but there came no answer to the coachman's vigorous ring. "*Gente che dormono*," he exclaimed as he pulled at the dangling rope a second time—"people who sleep." Stumbling feet sounded through the tiled corridor, trembling hands undid the latch, and a man, feeble rather than old, cordially bade us enter. Behind him tottered two or three older inmates, their faces lighted by a faint glow of pleasure or curiosity at having something happen. The corridor led to a little courtyard with a covered well. Here an ancient woman smiled benignly upon us as we passed through to the garden, where, as the artist had foreseen, was the best place from which to sketch the belfry. The door-keeper became our patron and attendant. He planted the sketching-stool securely on the steep slope of the

garden, he brought water for the brushes, he responded without manifest surprise to our praise of the yellowing stuccoed wall and of the green-stained bell. When work began, he insisted upon standing on the awkward slope to hold an umbrella over the painter. "You need not do that," she said; "it is difficult, and the umbrella will stay of itself, so." Neither of the strangers will forget the wistful voice that answered: "Please let me hold it, Signora; *non ho niente da fare*— I have nothing to do."

As we sat through the blue summer afternoon, the painter working swiftly, the idler watching shadow and sun upon a hundred hills, *il povero* told us of his life, and how illness and misfortune had brought him to this irksome quietude. He had fought in his youth, he had worked in the coast cities and on the islands, he had led even that most social of lives, a public cabman's. He was intelligent and not old, only ill, and stranded on this remote hilltop with a pitiful handful of the decrepit and feeble-minded. A foolish, monotonous song went droning up and down behind the cypresses. "It is the idiot," our friend explained. "He waters the flowers, *poveretto*." The old woman clattered to the courtyard door and smiled upon us with vacant amiability, and once or twice a voice came from the unseen road below. For the rest it was silence, save for the twitter of a myriad brown

birds in the cypress-trees.

"So this is the end of it," I thought, "the best that Lady Poverty can give to her servitors. Not undesirable gifts in themselves—beauty and quiet and leisure. Certain courtiers of Lady Riches might accept them gladly enough; but a picturesque belfry and a cypress avenue must be small comfort when one pines for the clamor of an Italian city square."

To break the spell of my own sentimental pathos, I called attention to the shadow that made the umbrella superfluous, and I presented to our *povero* day before yesterday's "Tribuna." He accepted it eagerly, and with quick courtesy withdrew to the further side of the garden, selected a spot still sunny, and, lying full length, read quietly until he heard us preparing to depart.

As we neared the city gate on our return, the late light struck along a row of cropped cypresses that inclose the burial-place of the poor, and, suddenly, the gray wall, the chapel, and all the cloud-veiled sky were touched with a consoling glory of rose and amethyst. "*Gente che dormono*," we quoted—"folk who sleep."



## THE FATE OF FRANCESCO

### I

"It is the will of the Madonna!" groaned Francesco, sitting bent and melancholy on the box of No. 45. Masaccio, with his head in a bag, munched his breakfast and did not listen. It was literally impossible for him to see beyond his present need. The midsummer morning was hot, and, at nine o'clock, the shadow of the wall was growing narrow. Masaccio's bag and ears and neck were already in the sun, yet it would not do to abandon the post which commanded the entrance to the one inn of the town, for Francesco knew that the two foreign ladies whom he had unsuccessfully pursued all the afternoon of the day before had not yet come out at the door. In the hope of their appearance he had neglected to meet the nine o'clock train.

Masaccio finished his breakfast; the nine o'clock train whistled far away, and Francesco drooped on his box. Things were going from bad to worse. In the spring, a month of good fortune had inspired him with the idea of buying Masaccio from the padrone. As soon as he should be himself padrone, he had thought gayly, he and Masaccio could earn a good liv-



ing, and before Christmas—he would marry Concetta in the church of San Bartolommeo. This morning he wondered how he had dreamed that dream. Day after day it had faded before him, and only last Sunday he had sworn to Concetta that unless he saved twenty lire before the week ended he would give up the struggle and go to America. He could sell his interest with the padrone to Antonio of No. 107 for the price of a third-class ticket to “Buonaria.” To-day was Friday, and the two lire that Francesco now rattled in his pocket made the sum of his week’s earnings. Even through his despondency, Francesco smiled in the sunshine, remembering how little Concetta had looked at him with steady eyes that Sunday afternoon under the olive trees in the farm garden, declaring almost fiercely: “If you go, Checco *mio*, I shall go also.” Concetta could never go, he thought, because of the old grandmother, yet the memory of her words comforted him.

Francesco started. He was upright in a second, flourishing his whip. “*Vuole Madama,*” he cried, for there, close beside him, was the *Inglese* in the gray gown. She had come out from the door and crossed the *piazza* while he was dreaming of Concetta.

A bargain for the drive to Montecorbo was quickly concluded, and, as the carriages from

the station came rattling up, all empty, the *Inglese*, half deafened by the cries of "*Vuole Madama? Vuole Madama?*" gladly seated herself in No. 45, which drove proudly to the inn door to receive the fair lady in blue.

As they clattered along the narrow streets Francesco gave thanks to the Madonna, who had blessed him with luck at last. Before his eyes danced the eighteen lire of his bargain, in a radiant if vague halo of a good *mancia*, for these were kindly strangers, it appeared. Deeper than this simple joy of receiving lay the delight of a little secret that promised two or three lire more if the Madonna continued favorable. His present passengers were, he saw, old travellers, yet they had forgotten to stipulate that the drive should include San Fortunato, which lies beyond the farther gate of Montecorbo. Francesco was too sage to speak of it, but waited his time, and meanwhile performed the duties of coachman and guide in his most engaging manner.

Masaccio sped gayly along the level road beyond the gate of San Pietro, that looks toward Montecorbo. Where the carriage crossed a stream, a girl was kneeling, washing linen. She wore a faded blue gown and green stays trimmed with magenta, and the kerchief that covered her bright curls was the color of a half-ripe lemon.

"*Buon giorno, Concetta!*" called Francesco.

The girl looked up, and the smile that flashed from the full lips to the great, grave eyes, was something for even a stranger to remember.

"*Buon giorno, Checco; buon viaggio,*" she said.

"'A smile that might make a man happy in the fire,'" quoted the blonde lady softly. Francesco did not know his Dante, but he understood, and he laughed aloud in pure delight.

"We are betrothed," he said simply. "The signora sees that she is beautiful."

As they left the plain and climbed the steep mountain road where a good coachman walks to spare his horse, Francesco, with his hand on the carriage beside the blonde lady, confided to these strangers the whole story of his hopes and his disappointments, and of the love between him and little Concetta.

Yet he did not forget to give his patrons "good service," and he easily won his coveted three lire for San Fortunato. As they returned toward the city, when the blue, summer distance of the far-reaching valley was like that in Perugino's "Adoration" left behind them in the church on the hill-top, it was, in fact, the astute Francesco who arranged a delightful programme for the following morning.

Francesco's face next day as he said goodbye to his *signore forestiere* and pocketed his *man-*

*cia*, was so bright that Padre Innocenti, arriving by the train from Rome, singled him out for the drive to the Convent of San Lorenzo. This seemed to Francesco the continued favor of the Madonna, but to Masaccio it appeared to be unexplained and arduous destiny.

When the padre had been set down at the convent gate it was past three o'clock. Masaccio was tired almost to the point of tears or speech. The level road stretched white and unshaded and no wind stirred. Vine leaves hung limp above pale clusters of half-ripened grapes. The brave, tasselled heads of the *gran turco* drooped ingloriously and the broad, red poppies shrivelled. Here and there in the acacia hedges a bee hummed over some sweet, belated blossom, and on every side *cicalas* sang lustily for joy of the midsummer heat.

Francesco sang even more lustily, as his left hand fingered the leathern bag in his trousers' pocket that contained in coin and paper thirty-two lire. He, like Masaccio, was tired, but the restorative touch of the leather bag set cheeks and eyes a-flame, and he flicked his whip at his poor comrade, who, unconscious of their bettered fortune, crawled ruefully along the blazing road.

Now Francesco was a good master and he knew that he ought to let Masaccio take the shortest road toward food and shelter; and

yet, if he turned here, beyond the villa, it would be but scant two miles to the *podere* where Concetta lived with her grandmother and Uncle Pietro in the little garden-house.

Concetta must at once be told of the thirty-two lire; Francesco could wait no longer, and he turned the aggrieved but submissive Masaccio into the road beyond the villa. "Take your own time, lazy-legs," he said condescendingly, as he curled himself upon the seat under the white umbrella, with his hand on his money-bag and his thoughts on Concetta's great eyes.

Masaccio staggered over the vacant road; there was not a creature in sight; man and beast and even bird were hidden away from the deadly sun. Masaccio was too weary to wonder what his master might mean; he only regretted dimly the quiet days when he had stood in the little square of San Donnino with his head in his dinner-bag.

Masaccio lifted his ears and sniffed. A light sound ran along the acacia hedges; the close-set plumes of the *gran turco* waved softly, rank after rank. Francesco started; he drew a long breath and the air felt cool. "*Il temporale!*" he muttered. From somewhere, unannounced, suddenly, clouds gathered. Dust rose and whirled on the white road. The breeze grew to great gusts that tore the hedges and

vine-garlands and bent the proud *gran turco* to the earth. Francesco drew up the reins and urged on his tired horse; then he stood up and looked off over the valley. Beyond the city, far away, where the plain narrowed in the grasp of the southern mountains, rose a dense black cloud. It seemed to reach from plain to sky, clean-cut and straight as a column, and it moved up the valley, swift and terrible.

Francesco shivered. "*Su, via!* Get along!" he cried to Masaccio. "It will be a hurricane!" Night seemed to fall suddenly. Forked lightning played across the black cloud-column, and thunder crashed among the hills.

The white road led almost directly toward the advancing terror, yet there would be no hope in turning back. The nearest shelter was Pietro's garden-house and the stables of the *podere*. But Masaccio was too weary. Not even fear could put speed into his stumbling feet.

And now the whole valley was a-quiver with the lightning, and here and there a bolt seemed to rend the ground. Masaccio threw up his terrified head and plunged heavily forward. Francesco called upon many saints, and made reckless vows to the Madonna. In answer she seemed to send him a thought of hope, for he recalled that, a few rods ahead, beside the road under a walnut tree, stood her very shrine.

Had not Concetta gathered red poppies as they walked together only last Sunday, and laid them at the blessed feet? The Madonna was a figure in blue and white, he remembered. She held *Gesù Bambino* upon her knee, and she bent her head a little, smiling always, very pitiful.

The black column was upon them; the city had disappeared; there was no light, save flashes of fire; and bolts seemed to crash at their feet. Masaccio fairly reared in terror. Francesco sprang from the carriage and ran to the horse's bridle, for there, at the roadside, was the walnut tree and Our Lady's shrine.

"Madonna *mia!* have pity!" cried Francesco.

He turned a beseeching glance toward the shrine. The white figure of Our Lady shone softly through the blackness. A blind impulse seized him to drag himself and his frightened horse somehow closer to that protecting presence.

The heavens opened in swift, awful fire. There was hideous crashing and splintering, and a moment later Masaccio, trembling from head to foot and tangled in his broken harness, stood and gazed helplessly at the roadside where his master lay crushed beneath a great bough of the walnut tree. From her shattered shrine the Madonna looked down, smiling always, very pitiful.



A mile away, at Pietro's garden-house, little Concetta hid her face in her grandmother's bed and cried for fear.

"Madonna protect thee, Checco *mio!*" she sobbed.

## II

From the fig tree in the corner of the garden, Pietro was gathering the last basketful of figs, black and small and wrinkled like himself. "They are not worth the trouble," he said. At the door of the garden-house the grandmother, with an earthen bowl on her knee, sat slicing bright tomatoes and spreading them to dry in the sun. Francesco lay on the ground with a pair of long crutches beside him. His left leg was cut off above the knee, and his left hand lacked two fingers. He was in his shirt sleeves, for Concetta, sitting near him on a low stool, was darning a rent in his shabby coat. The lemon-colored kerchief had slipped from her dark curls, and Francesco could see the pretty line of her neck. When the darn was finished, she bit the thread off close, holding the worn sleeve against her lips that trembled a little. Then she spoke pleadingly: "Be content, Checco *mio*. It is of the Madonna's mercy that thou wert not killed by the lightning. What should I have done then, *bene mio?*"

"That had been better fortune for thee, little



one!" Francesco answered gloomily, "and for me also."

"Do not say it! do not say it! Never say that again, *angelo mio!*" and Concetta dropped on her knees, and taking Francesco's head in her two little brown hands she covered his hair with kisses. The soft locks were almost as dark as her own and quite as curling. But Francesco would not smile. He drew himself up heavily, and felt for his crutches. "Come with me," he said. "I have something to say to thee."

Concetta helped him with coat and crutches, and they went slowly down the garden, across a bit of vineyard, stripped and golden, across the olive orchard to a stone bench that stood against the crumbling stuccoed wall, and here they sat down side by side. Near Francesco's end of the bench stood a great olive tree, gaunt and hollow and broken. It looked a hundred years old.

When Francesco spoke, it was in the very words he had said on the midsummer Sunday when last they sat here. Concetta's chief comfort in the cruel months between had been the thought that she should never hear them again.

"Concetta *mia*, I am going to America." The girl grasped his arm:

"No, no, Francesco. It is not possible. Never, never! Why dost thou say that?"

"I am worth nothing here," Francesco said bitterly. "And listen, Concetta. Carlo tells me that in America I can earn money, even without my leg."

"What wilt thou do, Checco? How—wilt—thou—earn money?" The words came slowly, as if each one hurt.

"I shall sing in the streets, for *soldi*," and he dug vindictively into the ground with the end of his crutch.

Concetta's voice was like a little cry.

"And I? What will become of me? Dost thou think of me, Francesco?"

But Francesco answered brutally, not looking at her. "It will be better for thee. Thou wilt forget. Thou must marry a sound man, not a miserable cripple—a thing useless and broken, half dead, like that old olive tree." Francesco struck the tree with his crutch and startled two tiny lizards that lay a-sunning on the gray trunk. Concetta's big eyes, bright with tears, followed the small, topmost branches that stood out against the sky, above the orchard wall. Among the silvery leaves half-ripened olives dangled, streaked with color, as if stained with dregs of wine.

Francesco turned a sidelong glance upon the girl's lifted face. He began to be ashamed of having hurt her.

As he looked, the pain slipped away from

the beautiful lips and eyes, and the whole face lightened with some joyous thought.

"Checco *mio*," she said, and there was no reproach in her voice, only measureless tenderness, "the olive tree has been hurt and broken like thyself, yet it is not useless. See, the olives ripen upon it as when the tree was strong; and it is strong still, *caro mio*, very strong, very brave, and so art thou."

"Concetta! Concetta! Checco! Checco!" It was Pietro's voice calling. "*Iddio sa*, where those *promessi sposi* have hidden themselves."

Concetta came running. "*Eccoci! Zio mio*, what is the matter?"

"It is Tonino who waits. He is in haste. Checco must come at once! *Subito, subito.*"

At the garden gate stood Masaccio, physically none the worse for the shock of that unfortunate August afternoon, but more than ever puzzled in mind. He could not understand why Tonino occupied the box of No. 45, and even less could he conjecture why Francesco, if he rode at all, sat behind in the carriage like a *signore*, and why his old, gay master no longer sang and whistled, only patted him and called him *poveretto* in a low, sad voice.

Concetta stood beside the carriage and spoke softly to her lover: "If thou goest, Checco *mio*, I shall go also."

Francesco shook his head. "*Addio*, little one;

be content," he said kindly.

"If thou goest, I shall go also," said Concetta, but this time she did not say it aloud.

### III

The rain fell steadily. Black streams trickled from the roof of the Roman express, drawn up before the station. Two *signori*, the only two, closed their dripping umbrellas and vanished into the first-class carriage. But the crowd, pushing back and forth before the doors of the third-class carriages, carried no umbrellas, and seemed not to notice the rain. They carried shapeless parcels tied up in shawls, in bits of sacking, even in soaking newspaper; they carried babies and wine bottles, sausages and loaves of bread.

It was a small company, but the train had come from Florence and appeared to be already full. The guards were ruthlessly separating families and friends. "Two places here! one more place! Go to the next carriage! You'll find seats at the rear!" From the door of the waiting-room came sobs and piteous farewells, for this forlorn band of pilgrims was bound for Naples and the sea, and for that far-off country whose very name is a thing of enchantment and of terror.

At the door of the last carriage Francesco waited his turn, with his little bundle of cloth-

ing slung over his shoulder. Suddenly he felt a soft touch on his arm.

"*Eccomi, Francesco mio!*" said the sweetest voice in the world.

"*Dio mio!* It is Concetta," he cried, more in terror than in joy.

"Two places here!" said the guard sharply. "There is no more time; make haste!" There was a click of closing doors. Francesco was pushed up the step, not knowing how, Concetta following at his heels. The carriage was full. The guard closed the door. "*Pronti!*" he shouted. "*Pronti!*" echoed the guard ahead.

"*Come mai, Concetta!* How didst thou leave home?" gasped Francesco.

"I said that I should come," she answered simply. "I am going out with the mother of Angela and Maria. They are in the next carriage."

"And the grandmother? What hast thou done with her?"

"*La cugina Luigia* has come to care for her," Concetta whispered, but the big eyes filled.

A bell rang. "*Partenza! par—ten—za!*" called the guards, and the train started.

The two were silent, looking out into the twilight wonderingly; for the girl had never made a journey, and the man's farthest adventure had been Perugia. Concetta gazed wistfully into the gray rain, and her lips trembled;

Francesco looked at Concetta. She wore a dark shawl, and her lemon-colored kerchief was dulled with the wet, but her hair curled more beautifully than ever and her cheeks were like the pomegranate blossoms above the villa wall in June.

"How pretty she is!" said a Florentine *popolana*. "And such a sweet voice! He is a beautiful youth, also," said another; "but that leg! What a pity! *Dio mio, che peccato!* and he so young!"

Francesco's left hand caressed Concetta as she leaned against his shoulder. They were utterly lacking in self-consciousness; they had never heard of conventions, and they thought only of each other. It grew quite dark. Some of their fellow-passengers were sleeping; some were eating luncheons which they took from newspaper parcels; there was an odor of cheese and sausage and red wine.

"*Chiusi! Chiusi!* Ten minutes to wait!" and the door flew open. "Tickets! tickets!" said the guard.

Francesco leaned down over Concetta's curly head.

"We have twenty hours in Naples, *carina mia*. We will find Padre Innocenti and be married, *nevero?*"

"As thou wilt, Checco *mio*," Concetta answered softly.

"Art thou happy, little one?"

"*Si, carino, contentissima*, very happy."

## IV

"But you cannot go, I tell you. It is impossible!" The agent almost shouted, but Francesco did not seem to understand.

The emigrants, in line, were moving slowly toward the windows where the passage-tickets were to be secured, but Francesco had been stopped by an official.

"I tell you that you cannot go; the company takes no cripples; step out, you are delaying things." The officer fairly dragged Francesco from his place in the line. Concetta, always at his elbow, slipped out also. There were cries of astonishment, rage, and sympathy, but the crowd pressed from behind and the space closed quickly.

Francesco struggled and shouted like a good Italian. "Let me alone! I will go! I have the money! Not go! *Che diavolo!* I will go, I say."

A second officer stepped forward. He was older and he spoke kindly. "It is not possible, my poor fellow; they should have told you. You have lost a leg and your hand is crippled. If we were to let you go aboard it would do no good; you would have all the long voyage for nothing; they would send you back from New York by the next ship."

"But Carlo told me that I could go; I can earn money; I shall sing in the streets; in Nuova York all are rich; they shower *soldi*. It is for that I go to Nuova York—because there are many, many rich signori. Carlo has told me that. It will be better than Buonaria. *Dio mio! Dio mio!* But I must go!"

"*Povero ragazzo*, poor boy!" "*Che peccato!*" "They will not let him go!" The exclamations of sympathy went up and down the line, women sobbed, and children cried out in fear of they knew not what. The older officer drew Francesco away from the crowd and explained to him his hopeless case. His statement was short, but not unkind.

"I am sorry," he said, "but there is nothing else to do. Have patience. Go home; you will find work; the city may help you. *Addio!*" and he walked away swiftly. There were thirteen hundred emigrants to be inspected before sundown, and the officer had not time for protracted sympathy. The cripple raged for a little; he called upon his saints; he wept. And Concetta? All this time she had not made a sound, she had not even cried, and the great eyes held no tears.

A bench ran along the wall, and Francesco sat upon it, his crutch beside him. His head was buried in his hands and he was crying, quietly now, like a tired child. He had not once noticed



Concetta; but now she bent over him; she stroked his forehead; she took off his hat and kissed the tangled curls.

"Do not cry, Checco *mio, carissimo!* Do not cry. Madonna will not forget us. We shall yet do well."

Francesco started. Beneath the absorbing sense of his own pain stirred at last some thought of the girl who loved him, and whom, in his boyish way, he loved.

"*Ma Concetta! come mai?* But thou must not stay! Where are Angela and Maria?—" He stopped short; for Concetta, with her two hands on his shoulders, was looking at him. First anger, then pain, then wonder looked out from the great eyes; but only for an instant. The beautiful face softened suddenly and the eyes grew tender, even glad; then the dimples showed in her cheeks, and she laughed outright, a low sweet laugh that showed her white teeth. "But Checco, Checco *mio!* didst thou think I wanted to go? I was afraid even with thee; and without thee—on that terrible sea? No, no, *grazia di Dio!*" and she hugged her lover's black head in sheer delight.

"But we must find Angela and Maria—I must say good-by. They will be looking for us, and be anxious. Come, Francesco."

They passed out upon the great wharf. It was but eight o'clock and the November morn-

ing was keen with a sea wind. They looked upon the smoke-crowned mountain and shuddered; they gazed upon the tossing gray water, and Concetta clung to Francesco's arm, and was unashamed of her joy. Far away lay the huge New York liner. Lighters were already loading with groups of frightened peasants—inland folk, nearly all of them, in abject terror of this cruel, unknown ocean; and cruel enough it looked on this bleak morning.

The emigrants were everywhere; huddled in miserable groups along the water front, sitting on their bags and bundles. Many were talking in sharp, excited voices; some were wailing aloud; a few were sleeping. Only the Neapolitans seemed gay, for they knew the sea, and were less afraid; and they need not wait for their turn in the ship's lighters. Had they not friends among the many boatmen, plying back and forth in little black boats, between the wharves and the great ships, shouting, laughing, and singing as if there were no heart-break in the world?

Angela, Maria, and their mother were soon found. They cried over Concetta, they lamented with Francesco. They left tremulous messages for friends at home. At last, with many tears and piteous fear, they let themselves be led aboard the lighter that steamed away toward the black hull and red smoke-stacks in the distance.

Francesco's brow had grown dark again with

disappointment and wounded pride. He had said *addio* to youths of his own age, no stronger, no braver than himself, who were nevertheless sailing away, in full confidence that fortune waited them across the sea—and he was left behind, crippled, useless, his life ruined at the start.

"Let us go away, Checco *mio*! Let us go home!" said Concetta, with her hand upon his arm.

They knew that there was a train at evening. Carlo had taken it once, Carlo the deceiver, who had so roused the ambition of poor Francesco. All day they wandered through the streets of the vast city, inquiring from time to time for San Antonio, where, Francesco thought, they would find Padre Innocenti. By chance they stood before the vast cathedral.

"Let us go in," Concetta whispered. Throngs of people were passing up and down the steps. The curtain at the central door was held up for them by a cripple with a wooden leg and a crutch. He was white-haired and his face looked like the leather of the curtain which he held. Francesco shivered and felt in his pocket for a *soldo*.

"God bless you and pity you, poor boy!" muttered the old man.

To Francesco and Concetta the great church, with its gilded ceiling, gorgeous paintings, and

shining marble pavement, seemed beautiful as Paradise might be. With a sure instinct Concetta led her lover on, on, up the long nave, till at the left, in the last chapel they saw a hundred candles burning before a tall statue of Our Lady. Concetta forgot everything, and Francesco almost forgot his pain. The Madonna had pink cheeks, and her dress was pink and blue silk, with tinsel. A score of worshippers knelt on the chapel steps among the votive wreaths of wax and glittering beads. On the lowest stair, half-frightened by this splendid vision of the Queen of Heaven, so unlike the little figure in the roadside shrine, Concetta knelt with Francesco beside her. His crutch rattled on the pavement as he laid it down.

Outside in the porch, as they came away, Concetta plucked at her lover's arm. "Look, Francesco!"

In a corner stood a boy on crutches, with a tray of small merchandise slung about his neck. He was laughing as he made change. His hair curled about his head, and his dark face was beautiful.

"Thou couldst do that, thou also, Checco *mio*!" said Concetta timidly.

## V

"What do you suppose has become of No. 45?" said the blonde lady. "I believe that I stayed over the train in the hope of seeing him. We

are the only people in the world who ever came twice to this place."

"I stopped over to see that Niccolò once more," said the dark lady severely. "I may be extravagant enough to stay till tomorrow and go again to Montecorbo—at least I may, if I find No. 45;" and they laughed at their mutual folly.

"Listen," said the blonde lady. "What a wonderful voice!"

A man was singing a Neapolitan lovesong. The voice was full of sweetness and of pain. The visitors turned the corner, and on the steps of the little cathedral they saw the singer.

His quick eye instantly noted the strangers, and he came nimbly toward them.

"Do you wish some matches, Signore?" he asked with the old smile.

"*Si, sì*"—began the blonde lady and stopped.

"*Madonna mia!*" exclaimed Francesco. "It is my signora!"

"Helen," cried the blonde lady, "Helen, it is No. 45!"

. . . . .

"If the signore would have the kindness to stay," said Francesco, as he stumped beside them toward their hotel, "Tonino will give good service. *Si, si*, I might go also on the box with Tonino. It would be a great honor to accompany the signore."

"Will you take us by way of the farm, to see

Concetta?" asked the blonde lady.

"*Ma si*, Signora, surely. The signora is very kind. And there is the *bambina*. She has eleven months, Signore; she is beautiful, you know."

"Is she as beautiful as her mother?"

Francesco shrugged his shoulders, and smiled wisely.

"*E sempre bellissima*, Concetta," he said. "Always very beautiful."

## BETTINA: A TRUE STORY

Bettina's grandmother sat on the low stone door-sill, where the sunshine was hot even in January. The old woman was knitting, but her needles clicked slowly, and her head drooped more and more. Bettina watched till the wrinkled hands lay idle. "Nonna is asleep," said Bettina softly to Giannettino. Giannettino said nothing; he lifted one yellow ear, and partly opened one eye for a second; then he stretched his two fore paws further into the sunshine, put his head down on them and lay quite still. "Gianettino is asleep," said Bettina to herself. Bettina looked at the chestnut-roaster that stood beside her grandmother's knee, and at the little table covered with bright red apples. "If I go to sleep," she thought, "Checco may take an apple, or some chestnuts." She stood up and slowly counted the chestnuts in the roaster. There were twenty-one. She knew the number of red apples on the table, for she had counted them when she laid them out, and Nonna had sold three since; one to the match-vendor, and one each to Annetta and Carolina on their way to school.

The charcoal-man's lean horse came slowly

around the corner, and then the street was quiet, for it was noon, and the people were eating or sleeping. Even from the market, half a block away, there was little noise. The calls of the fried-fish man and the polenta man could be heard now and then; and the salad-woman's donkey gave a long, lonely shriek from time to time. He had been standing in one spot since five o'clock in the morning, and life seemed dull to him.

Checco's father passed, carrying his lunch on a brown paper: a piece of bread and two, twisted, delicious-looking little fried fish. Bettina wondered what they tasted like. She had her own lunch in her pocket tied under her apron, but it was only a bit of bread, and she did not feel hungry.

Checco's father nodded pleasantly at Bettina, as he passed to his own doorstep and sat down to eat his lunch in the sunshine. "The grandmother sleeps well," he said. "And Giannettino also," answered Bettina. "Poor little creature!" said Checcho's father. He meant Bettina, and she heard, but she did not mind; she thought, "He is kind-hearted," for Bettina was used to pity from her friends, and even from strangers. She was, indeed, a "poor little creature." All the five years of her life she had been weak and in pain. Her hands and face were covered with sores, so that, sometimes,



people turned away in disgust when they passed her in the street.

Bettina's mother spent all the days at a great public fountain, washing linen. She used to come home with hands red and chapped from the cold water, and with rheumatism in her knees. She was a tall, coarse-featured woman, but she was always gentle to Bettina and called her "my poor, dear, little thing." Bettina, being too feeble to play with the other children, stayed with her grandmother and Giannettino. Nonna was so deaf that it was hard to talk to her, so Bettina talked mostly to Giannettino, to whom she told all her thoughts.

People said of Bettina, who never cried: "How patient she is, poor dear!" But Bettina was not always patient. When she saw Annetta and Carolina, who lived on the floor below her, playing at hide-and-seek up and down the black staircase, where there were the darkest of corners to hide in, Bettina, breathless and faint from climbing the one hundred and six steps that led to her mother's attic, would stamp her little foot feebly and say hoarsely: "It isn't fair, Giannettino *mio*, it isn't fair! I, too, want to run and play, and not be so tired." But when she remembered lame Nino with the crutch, she felt ashamed.

Bettina moved further away from Giannettino into a narrow strip of shadow. It was

cold, but her head ached. Checco's father had finished his lunch, and he, too, was sound asleep, filling up the doorway so that Checco, coming out, leaped nimbly over him. Checco smiled knowingly at Bettina, as much as to say: "Old folks must sleep at noon, Tina." He did not even look at the chestnuts and apples, and Bettina was grateful. Presently two women came by talking. They were Marta, the seamstress, and lame Nino's mother, who sold papers in the Via Tritone.

"Nino must be selling the papers," thought Bettina. "I have not seen him since Christmas Day."

"I tell you," said Nino's mother, "my boy walks as well as anybody. She is a saint, the English doctor, and works miracles! The children go to her lame and blind, and she sends them away cured. God be praised for my Nino, *poveretto*, now he can be like other boys and grow into a strong man—who knows?" The women stopped at the corner, where their ways separated. Bettina left her doorstep and stood close beside them, while they said long good-bys. Then she followed Nino's mother. She wanted to speak to her, but she could not get her breath. After a minute Nino's mother noticed the uneven little steps at her side and looked down.

"Why, it is Bettina! Where are you going

little one?"

Bettina looked up at her. She gasped and panted in her excitement. "Where is the English saint, who does miracles?" she said.

"*Poverina!*" cried Nino's mother, "it would be indeed a miracle if she could cure that little face of yours!"

"Where is she?" said Bettina simply. "Is it far?"

"Very far, little one; across the river in Trastevere, near the Ponte Sesto. There is a big white house called the 'Hospital for Children.' It is written over the door. You must get your mother to take you, Bettina *mia*, the English doctor might cure; who knows?" But Nino's mother shook her head as she went up the stairs. "It would be a true miracle to cure that one!" she said.

Bettina went back to the door-stone. Giannettino woke up, and she gave him part of her bread. Then she told him as well as she could about the house where they made sick children well. "It is far, Giannettino *mio*," she said, "we must wait till morning.

Early next morning, Bettina, carrying Giannettino in her arms, walked with her mother to the end of the little market square and bade her good-by at the corner. Except when it was stormy, or when Bettina was too ill to go over the one hundred and six steps, the three always

made this journey. When Bettina could not go, she sent Giannettino, who would come running back up the stairs to his little mistress, with mamma's good-by kiss on his yellow head. When the three reached the corner, there was always the same conversation. "Good-by, little one. Be good." "A kiss also for Giannettino, mamma, and one more for me." "Good-by, my dearest. Take care of the grandmother."

Today when mamma was out of sight, Bettina did not go back to take care of grandmother. Instead, she hugged Giannettino tighter and, half afraid of what she was doing, turned down a steep, narrow street that led to a wider one at the end of which, she knew, was the great fountain. Further than the square of the fountain she did not know her way; but she knew that she must cross the river at the Ponte Sesto. The little square was full of people, though it was so early; but above the noise of the street venders and the coachmen Bettina could hear the roar of the water that gushed out from the four great mouths and fell into a basin so broad that it seemed like a lake. The water lay all in shadow, for the winter sun would not reach it till nearly noon. Bettina watched the women drawing water from the fountain. One had a bright copper can which she lifted steadily and car-

ried away on her head. Another had two big straw-covered wine bottles that took long to fill. Bettina looked at many faces before she decided whom to speak to. One woman, with curly dark hair and red lips, smiled down at her and gave her courage.

"Excuse me, could you tell us the way to the Ponte Sesto?" asked Bettina.

"But it is far away, my child!" said the woman, kindly.

"I know, but we can find it," said Bettina, confidently.

"It is a brave baby," said the woman to her neighbor. "Well, little one, take the street straight ahead here and cross two narrow streets. The third is the Corso, and you must turn to your left, but you can ask someone there where to go next. Do you understand?"

"Yes, thank you," said Bettina, and she went slowly on through the crowd. It was long before she found the river. Sometimes she could not understand the directions that people gave her; sometimes she saw no one whom she dared to ask. Sometimes she was so tired that she sat down in a doorway to rest.

Bettina and Giannettino saw many strange and beautiful sights that morning. They passed a wonderful, round church, with a porch of great shadowy columns; in the centre of a square, they saw a huge stone elephant with

a tower on his back; they got lost in the biggest market that they had ever seen. Here a boy had three yellow puppies for sale, and Giannettino became so excited that he squirmed out of Bettina's arms to dance and bark about the three puppies, who pulled at their cords and danced and barked as well as their baby voices and their clumsy baby paws allowed. When Bettina's courage and Giannettino's patience were almost spent, they reached the river and the Bridge of Pope Sixtus. The water was high and shining in the sunlight. They had never seen anything so beautiful. It seemed to Bettina that there were palaces and churches and towers everywhere. Far up the stream on the further side a vast dome floated in the blue like a giant soap-bubble, and high on the hill a great man on a tall horse stood out against the sky. Bettina wondered what he could be doing up in the air. She thought it must be St. Michael, the Archangel.

Beyond the bridge, Bettina had to ask a new question: "Will you tell me how to find the house where they cure sick children?" Poor little Bettina! She asked her question over and over again, but no one knew. One sent her in this direction, another in that. Her back ached and her feet were sore. Giannettino was restless and whined. Bettina had forgotten to bring

the piece of bread for their lunch. "We must find the place, Giannettino," said Bettina bravely, but her voice trembled. "Nino's mother said it was here, beyond the bridge." Giannettino whimpered, for Bettina hugged him closer, which made him feel worse because his stomach was empty. "I am sorry, Giannettino *mio*. I have asked a hundred people," said Bettina. "Here comes a kind-looking man. I will ask him, also."

A tall gentleman was passing, holding a beautiful little boy by the hand. They were laughing and talking, and Bettina was not afraid. "Excuse me, sir. Can you tell us where to find the house where they cure sick children?" Bettina's knees trembled under her, and her eyes filled with tears.

At first the gentleman looked puzzled, but the little boy said: "I know, papa, she means the day hospital for children. It is around the next corner, only a little way. Maria showed it to me."

"Very well, Carlino, point out the way. Come, little girl, my son will show you the hospital." The boy ran ahead, and Giannettino ran after him, for Bettina's tired arms could no longer hold their uneasy burden. She followed, at the side of the kind gentleman, and in a minute, Carlino stopped at a sunny door over which there were letters that Bettina could not read.

Carlino rang the bell, and the new friends waited till the door was opened by a pleasant-faced servant, who helped a lame boy down the step, while she greeted the tall gentleman.

"We met this little girl in the street, asking the way to the hospital," said the gentleman. "Can you take her in?"

"The hours are over," said the woman, "until to-morrow."

Then Bettina burst into loud crying: "I want to see the doctor-lady! I must see the doctor-lady, who does miracles."

"Poor baby, poor baby!" said the servant. "I will call the doctor; she is still here."

Near a broad window, where a white azalea shone in the sunlight, Bettina stood at the doctor's knee.

"Where do you live, dear?" asked the doctor.

"Via Stretta, near the market."

"But that is very far. Who brought you over here?"

"No one. I came with Giannettino."

"And your mother?"

"Mamma washes. She is at work."

"Was there no one else to come?"

"No, Signora Doctor, there is only the Nonna, and she is too old. She is deaf, and the streets frighten her."

"How did you know about the hospital?"

"It was lame Nino's mother. I heard her tell-



ing Marta of the lady who does miracles. Are you the lady? Will you cure me quick, please, so that I can go home to Nonna?" Bettina felt as if the room were turning around, and the white azalea danced before her eyes. Then she found herself in the doctor's lap.

"Be patient, little one. We will see what can be done. What have you eaten to-day?"

"Nothing, Signora. I forgot the bread, and Giannettino is hungry also."

Giannettino, who lay in a despairing heap on the sunny floor, moved his tail and whined as he heard his name mentioned.

The doctor rang a bell and the pleasant-faced servant entered.

"Bring a bowl of soup here, Maria, and bring something for the dog as well. This child has had no breakfast and is ready to faint."

"Quickly, Signora Doctor, and you? it is one o'clock."

"Tell Costanza that I will lunch here. And, Maria, get a bed ready in the little nursery."

Bettina had never tasted anything like the soup that Maria brought to her in a big blue bowl. There were long, delicious pieces of macaroni in it, and bits of something white and soft that was not bread. Bettina wondered if it could be chicken. She had heard Checco tell about eating chicken when, on a holiday, he had helped old Giacomo wash dishes at a restaurant

in Via Tritone. Giannettino, with a big cracked plate set neatly on a newspaper, was eating the best dinner of his life. He would not even look up when Bettina spoke to him.

"Are you happy, Giannettino *mio*?" Giannettino growled and choked over a big mouthful. "He has not time to be polite," said the doctor,

After lunch Bettina was undressed and laid in a bed, where she promptly went to sleep. When she awakened the doctor was in the room with a pretty lady in a white apron and cap.

"Now, little one," said the doctor, "first of all you must let nurse give you a nice bath." And the doctor went out of the room.

Bettina was frightened at first, at the strange place, at the little bath tub and the new lady in the white cap. But the face under the cap was so gay, and the water felt so warm and the sponge was so funny (Bettina had never seen a sponge except through the glass of the pharmacy window on the corner) that she forgot her shyness and told the nurse all about Nonna and mamma and Checco; and how she could not play hide-and-seek on the stairs like Annetta and Carolina; and how she wanted to get well and go to school.

The nurse put Bettina into the bed again, and began to arrange a small table with curious bottles and fat little pots. Then she spread out a long narrow table that had folding legs,

and laid a long white towel over it. Bettina wondered if there were going to be another lunch. Presently the doctor came in, and said, cheerily: "Now, little girl, we'll see what can be done for you." The nurse placed a pillow at one end of the narrow table and, lifting Bettina from the bed, laid her softly down on the white towel. Very gently doctor and nurse examined the poor little body, bathing the sore places with something soft and healing that Bettina liked.

Then the doctor said, and the wide blue eyes were grave and pitiful: "Now, you must be a brave little girl, for I have to hurt you."

"Why must you hurt me?" said Bettina.

"Because, dear, this yellow salve will cure all these poor little sore spots, but it will pain you at first."

"If it will cure me, I don't mind the hurt," said Bettina.

"That's a brave baby," said the nurse. "Now, then, courage!"

Poor little Bettina! The yellow salve burned and smarted, so that the tears came, even though she shut her eyes tight to keep them in. But she did not complain; she did not even cry out aloud. When it was over the doctor and nurse praised her and petted her, so that she almost forgot the pain.

While the nurse was dressing Bettina, the

doctor went away, and came back in hat and coat.

"The child cannot go alone," she said, "it will be dark. I'll take her with me as far as the Fountain, and then she will be almost home. I am late already."

At the corner, the doctor called a coachman and Bettina, for the first time in her life, had the joy of riding in a carriage.

The child sat very straight and still, holding fast to Giannettino, who trembled from the tips of his yellow ears to the end of his yellow tail, with strange and terrifying new sensations. From the carriage the world looked so different to Bettina that, if the doctor had not called her attention to every turning, so that she might know how to come again, the drive would have been like a dream. The clouds over the river were pink with sunset and, at the Fountain, the afternoon shadows were already dark.

"Come day after to-morrow," said the doctor, "and come early, dear."

Nonna sat in a low chair, with a pot of charcoal in her lap, which was her way of keeping warm. She was moaning to herself: "The child is lost, lost! It grows dark and she does not come."

The door opened softly, and Gianettino came prancing across the floor and leaped almost into

the hot charcoal. Bettina threw her arms around her grandmother's neck and fairly shouted in her ear: "Oh, Nonna, Nonna *mia*, the doctor-lady is making me well!"

Bettina was very tired, and the yellow salve still smarted on the poor little arms and legs. In the night she dreamed that Checco was touching the sore places with a lighted match, and she cried out and woke up. But Bettina told no one of the pain and, when Friday came, she bade Nonna and mamma good-by cheerily, and started bravely on her way. To-day she left Giannettino at home with Nonna. "He got so heavy, dear Giannettino," she said.

Bettina found her way easily this time, and though the walk seemed long, she did not even sit down to rest. Just before she pulled the bell at the hospital door, her heart failed her, for she remembered the yellow salve that burned. She wanted to run home to Nonna and Giannettino, and she felt little and afraid. She stood on the step and talked to herself gravely: "If you don't go in, Bettina, you will never get well, like Nino. It is the yellow thing that cures, the doctor said. Perhaps there will be more soup, Bettina, and chicken!" She pulled the bell, hard, and was soon in the sunny room where the white azalea was whiter than ever, having six new blossoms.

Every other day for two months Bettina

made her pilgrimage. Through all the first month the treatment was painful, and the tears would often come from under the tight-shut lids, but, as she grew better, the little patient became gay and even noisy, and was such a chatterbox that she had to be sent home, else she would have stayed till dark.

In her eagerness to be cured, Bettina was impatient, sometimes, to the point of naughtiness. One day the nurse decided that the painful salve would better be omitted, as it had done its work. Instead of being grateful, Bettina began to cry angrily:

"I want the yellow thing that hurts! Put on the yellow thing that hurts! It is that that makes me well!" she wailed, to the astonishment of the nurse.

On a beautiful spring day, Bettina was to make her last visit to the hospital, and mamma was to go also, to learn from the nurse how to take care of the little girl in the future.

Though it was a holiday, mamma had some clean linen to carry to the ironer in a far-off street. Mamma walked very straight with the big white parcel on her head; Bettina held her hand and trotted along gaily, for she seldom felt tired now. Giannettino went also, but he had grown too big to be carried. He ran so far ahead that Bettina and her mother looked anxiously after him, expecting him to disappear

entirely.

When the linen had been left in the Via Giulia and they came into familiar streets, there was so much to show to mamma that Bettina's tongue wagged faster than Giannettino's tail. There was the market where Giannettino had barked at the puppies; there was the bridge, and the great dome; there were the yellow roses hanging over the wall of a palace garden. Bettina had watched every bud in the winter; sometimes there had been only three or four, but now there were thousands and the odor filled the street.

In the doctor's sunny room, the white azalea was gone, and a great pot of tulips stood in its place, but the doctor's sweet face had not changed. Every one was so kind that Bettina's mother could not think of words enough to say, so she dropped upon her knees and kissed the doctor's hand, and cried a little behind her apron.

Everybody petted and kissed Bettina, and called her a brave little girl; and Maria declared that she wouldn't know her for the same child, she was so improved.

Bettina dragged mamma from room to room, to see the bed and the bath, the operating-table and even the pot of yellow salve. It was hard to keep her quiet long enough to give the doctor and nurse a chance to talk; but, when the three were in the street, and Maria had closed the

white door, Bettina was quite still, because of something in her throat that choked her. So mamma did the talking, and was so full of praises for doctor and nurse and Maria, that Bettina grew happy again, and when she reached the top of the one hundred and six steps, she was not too tired to shout the whole story into Nonna's ear.



## THE BOYS OF ITALY\*

### Introduction to *The Heart of a Boy*

Because I am indebted for many pleasures to the boys of Italy; because their faces and their voices will always come back to me when I remember the sunny city squares, the olive orchards, and the mountain paths where I talked with them, I am glad to show my gratitude by introducing a few of these far-away friends to their American brothers.

Since in Italy I keep holiday, and am unwilling to go to school often, even as a visitor, the boys whom I know best are street boys.

### THE BEGGARS

In a great seaport like Naples, where there is much poverty, and in little towns, where everybody is poor, the beggars make one sad.

The boys who beg are of all kinds. There is the impertinent beggar, who looks as if he might grow up to be a highway robber; there is the pale, whining beggar, who follows a stranger from street to street and is as hard to get rid of as a mosquito; there is the occasional beggar, contented enough over his play until he spies a "foreigner" and thinks: "Here is a chance to get a penny." Of these last is

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the rosy-cheeked rogue of five or six years who looks up with great sad eyes, and red lips that smile in spite of him, and says: "Signora, I am dying of hunger." When he is laughed at he laughs, too, and runs away to play, and to lie in wait for a more sympathetic stranger.

It is always hard to refuse the appeal of a child, and we knew often that some of these troublesome little fellows were scantily fed. Still, the least that the foreigner can do in Italy is to help the wise folk who are striving to make begging unnecessary and impossible, and, for the most part, we kept our vow that we would not give coppers to children. We found, however, an innocent way of softening the discipline for them and for ourselves by candies, sweet wafers, and even "educator" biscuits, left over from our voyage. The delight with which these things were received brought tears to our eyes sometimes.

I shall never forget emptying my bag for a group of clamorous, ragged, half-starved peasant children on an Umbrian hillside. As I was groping for the last candies the grandmother came close to me and held out a bony hand. "Haven't you one for the old woman, signora?" she pleaded. I realized as never before how in Italy sugar is so dear that the poorest people pine and sicken for the taste of something sweet, as soldiers have done in

camp or in prison.

A step above the beggar on the road to self-support is the boy who offers a service for his *soldo*. Very likely he only rings a bell which you were just about to ring; or he points you out a door which you know as well as he; or he turns handsprings along the road beside your carriage, and does it so well that you persuade yourself that you are rewarding skill, instead of encouraging beggary, as you throw out your pennies; or he asks, "Will you please make a portrait of me?" and expects a copper in return for the favor of posing. In any case, he is so quick and so merry that you can't reject the superfluous attention, and sometimes you find him useful. Moreover, if you refuse to let him carry your coat, or show you the way, he is pretty sure to beg for a *soldo*, and it is better to let him earn it.

One thing I have noticed among even the roughest street boys in Italy. They are almost never unfair or ungenerous to one another. It is safe to hand all the candies to the biggest boy in a group and trust him to give a just share to each of the others, down to the baby in the red apron. At the railroad station of Cortona, one hot August afternoon, we were besieged by a band of urchins so ragged that their clothes seemed in danger of falling off. "Let me carry your bag, signora!" "Would

you like me to get you a carriage?" "Give me a *soldo* for charity; I have great hunger!" We ignored them until our luggage was safe in the hotel omnibus. Then, finding that the omnibus must wait for the train from Rome, due in half an hour, we became more sociable. After much explanation, we induced the youngsters to stand in a group instead of in a straight line while I took a photograph of them. Then I brought out the blue package of candies. It was but small in proportion to the number of grinning mouths. To the naughtiest, roughest, most impish boy of them all I said: "If I give you these, will you divide evenly?" "Yes, signora, surely." And he stood in the center and counted out with absolute fairness till the last candy was gone. The only privilege which he kept for himself was that of licking the blue paper.

The train from Rome brought two army officers, and we were deserted by our little friends, two of whom fell upon the soldiers, seized their luggage, and with eloquent tongues persuaded them that the two-mile, up-hill walk was more comfortable than driving, and that it would be nothing to carry the heavy knapsacks. These last, in fact, were already slung upon the slim, boyish shoulders. As our omnibus lumbered up the steep, sunny hill we passed the two tall officers and the two tiny

guides. The boys saluted us, laughing, and proudly trying to carry themselves erect under a weight that might have tired strong men.

#### THE GUIDES

I wish that I had pictures of all the little guides whose services I have received or refused. As I look back, I wonder how I had the heart to refuse any of them, even the wicked imps at Frascati who told new and contradictory lies every day, and it is to be feared, stole the figs and peaches from the garden.

I remember one ragamuffin who, in the shadow of a Greek temple at Paestum, told us in English that he had lived in New York. Another, at Naples, insisted that we were looking for the American consul (as we certainly were) and that he would show us the way (which we knew quite well).

"Where did you learn English?" I asked, for he spoke prettily.

"In the street, signora."

At the top of a steep street in Perugia we were almost mobbed by a group of tiny boys determined to guide us whether we wanted them or no.

"Signora, I will take you to San Bernardino."

"Thank you, but we have just been there."

"And to San Severo."

"But we know that, too."

"To San Lorenzo and San Domenico."

"We have seen them often."

Then the biggest boy, dancing up and down before us, and grinning from ear to ear, reeled off the names of a dozen churches of Perugia, including San Pietro, without the walls, far beyond our walking distance. When we could be heard, we said:

"No, no! you are all too late."

"*Si, si, signora, troppo tardi*, too late, too late!" and he went off gayly. He walked on his hands, and his feet waved in the air with a fine, careless grace that led us to believe that this was his habitual manner of walking. We wondered if he would have guided us in this fashion all the way to San Pietro.

I am grateful to two little fellows in Foligno, who knew all the short cuts and who prattled of saints and painters with much fluency and no more blunders than those of grown guides or, perhaps, even of guide books. I have long felt, too, that I owe an apology to the fat boy who rode on the back of our carriage the whole distance from Amalfi to Sorrento, meeting with unconquerable good nature our undisguised efforts to get rid of him. His courtesy in telling the names of places, in holding umbrellas, and in gathering rosemary and bright berries from the rocks above us; more than all, his sweetness of spirit won our hearts in the end, so that we gave him his fee and

thanked him as cordially as if we had begged for his company.

But the boy whom I shall always remember as the best of guides lives in a little town with a hard name,—San Gimignano, near Siena. Hundreds of years ago it was called San Gimignano of the Beautiful Towers, and it has changed less than most old cities. Many of its towers still stand, and on its hilltop, it looks like the walled and towered towns that the painters put into their pictures five hundred years ago. It is a poor little city, but it was rich once, when great artists came to paint lovely frescoes on the walls of its churches; and these things one still goes to see.

As we climbed down from the absurd little diligence, a public carriage something like a stage-coach that had brought us up the dusty hill one August day, a group of small boys stood in the square of San Gimignano, each one eager to be taken as our guide. My artist companion quickly chose the smallest of them all, because, instead of teasing, he stood and smiled at us in a jolly fashion, as much as to say: "You may have me if you like, but I shall be happy either way."

"Can you guide?"

"Yes, signora."

"Do you know the city?"

"Oh, yes, signora."

"How old are you?" (He looked about six.)

"Nine years old, signora. I am little."

Many Italians are blond, and this little fellow had wide blue eyes and fair skin and pale brown hair. He was little, as he said, but his pink cheeks were as round as those of a painted cherub, and his red lips were always smiling.

He proved a wise little guide, even leaving us to eat our luncheon alone in a garden on the height, meeting us in the square two hours later according to promise.

When we were too tired for more sight-seeing, and the artist wished to go outside the walls and sketch the towers, he knew "the best place." He said: "I carried the things for an English lady every day all summer. The English lady always painted. She did not see anything, signora. She did not go to the Cathedral, nor to San Agostino, nor to the Palazzo; she was painting every day."

While the artist sketched I sat on the burnt grass at the roadside and listened to my guide, who spoke correctly and prettily, as the common people often do in Tuscany, and whose voice was pure music. He ate the remains of our simple lunch and smiled over it so beatifically that I knew he could not be accustomed to delicacies.

"What do you have to eat at home, every day?" I asked, forgetting good manners.



"Bread, signora."

"Don't you have soup?"

"Yes, soup on Sundays, signora, because Sunday is a holiday."

"Do you never have meat?"

"Meat? Never, signora. We are poor."

I stopped the catechism, ashamed of my curiosity. Then he told me that his father was in the hospital in Siena, and that he was the oldest of four children and helped his mother. His name was Gaetano Benincasa, and he had never been farther from home than the monastery, which he pointed out, some two miles away, where, he said, they gave bread to the poor people on Saturdays.

"Have you never been down to Poggibonsi?" I asked, indicating the little town at the foot of the mountain, not eight miles away.

"No, signora, never. We are poor," and I wished that my Italian was equal to something more than asking questions.

Presently two boys came by, dragging a little cart. They were ragged and rough, with harsh voices and hard faces. They stopped to talk, or rather to shriek at us, and I noticed that Gaetano answered them quite civilly. When they were gone he lifted his big eyes with a puzzled look.

"Those boys are bad," he said. "They are bad to their mother. They are rich," he added.

"They own a field."

The last we saw of Gaetano, he was running after the diligence to catch a big, red-cheeked peach that we threw out to him, hoping it might not make him ill. It was far too hard to eat.

I shall not see him again. Perhaps he is so grown and changed that I should not know him if I saw him, but, sometimes, in a picture gallery or great shadowy church, the eyes of some boy angel look out from the wall with a confiding friendliness that recalls my little guide of San Gimignano.

#### THE WORKERS

I have been told over and over that the Italian poor are lazy. Italians themselves say it, and visiting foreigners say it, yet, had I not been told, I should never have discovered it for myself. They are often idle, it is true, and there is, doubtless, a lazy class, but everywhere even in Naples—which has the name of being laziest of all places I was daily impressed by the hard toil of the poor folk, even of the children.

This is not the place to tell of the pale, overworked little girls whom I have seen, but I could muster a regiment of boy workers. There was a little spool maker in a dark doorway of one of the worst streets in Naples,—a street where the sun never reaches the pave-

ment, not even at noon; there was the little shoemaker in Assisi, who worked all the long summer afternoons, and had always a smile for the passing stranger; there was the boy at the reel in a dingy weaver's shop in Prato, where there was neither air nor light, and the wood and charcoal man's boy whom I saw every day in Florence, and who made Enrico's friend Coretti seem entirely real. Boys who work in the open air are more fortunate. The rope makers, the olive gatherers, the little boatmen, fishermen, gardeners, and, in the town, the vendors of flowers and onions, of birds and puppies, looked happy enough.

But even out of doors much of the work is too hard for the young workers. The boy who walks five miles at dawn to cut fagots on the mountain brings down, at evening, a load that bows him double, and covers him, all except his legs, so that he looks like a bit of Birnam Wood coming to Dunsinane. In the city streets one is constantly shocked by the burdens that slender boys of ten or twelve are allowed to carry, and by the carts that they are allowed to draw or push.

I watched a lad one morning trying to drag a charcoal cart on a street that had a scarcely perceptible rise. I had, in fact, never noticed that it was not level. The street was wide, and the boy tried to take long tacks, as a don-

key will do on a side hill; but the load pulled him back, and he could not turn the corner till a stranger, observing his trouble, gave the cart a strong push from behind. Nor shall I forget two tiny road menders on the way to La Verna, who looked solemn and withered like little old men.

Sometimes we came upon a boy whose work had the charm of adventure, even of danger. In the Furlo Pass—a great defile in the Apennines—we looked up at a cliff that seemed straight as a wall and saw a man, two women, and a boy cutting grass. How they got there we never knew.

The rocks above and beneath seemed absolutely sheer, and below them roared a mountain river. The boy had a bag tied to his waist, and a sickle in his hand. The bag was filled with grass, and it dragged or swung along the rock as the boy moved from one green tuft to another. He saw the strangers down in the pass, across the stream, and, as if to boast of his perilous position, he quietly dislodged a stone with his heel. It fell to the river without striking the cliff. The boy laughed, but I, on the broad Roman road far below, felt dizzy, and looked away.

In the Alban Hills, one morning in late October, when the rains had made the grass soft and deep and filled it full of pink-tipped

daisies, we heard a muffled, pattering sound on the road, three or four new voices at the villa gate, and presently cries from the kitchen: "The sheep are coming! The sheep are coming!"

There they were,—a great white, woolly flock, four shepherds, three big white dogs, one donkey, and, last of all, the *pastorello*, the shepherd boy. He wore a sheepskin coat, and carried in his arms a tiny, new-born lamb. He dropped the lamb into the long grass, where it lay for an hour without moving.

The shepherds surrounded a large space of grass with a cord and stakes. This took about five minutes. The sheep were driven into it, and in fifteen minutes every daisy within the inclosure had disappeared.

The *pastorello* was most friendly and from him I learned how they had come from near Perugia, driving the flock through the warm Umbrian valleys and over the white roads of the Campagna. They had been eleven days on the way. Here, on the southern hills, they would find pasture all through the winter.

That night the men slept beside their sheep under the stars, and the white dogs kept watch; but I noticed that the *pastorello* slept in the little shepherd's hut with some of the mother sheep and baby lambs.

A day or two later we went down to the

city, reluctantly leaving the shepherds and the sheep. In January I returned for a day and I sought the *pastorello* on many steep hillsides. At last I found the flock and an older shepherd, but when I asked for the little one I was told: "The *pastorello* has gone to Rome, signora."

#### THE SCHOOLBOYS

As for the schoolboys, Enrico's journal and the pictures show them far better than I can.

School children in Italy, boys and girls, are almost always accompanied to and from school by father, mother, grandmother, or nurse; so that, passing a school at closing time any day, one may see a group of men and women waiting in the street. Often the mother or grandmother of one boy is escort to four or five little neighbors.

Though Enrico's story was written long ago, and schools and fashions of dress have changed, one may still see, in almost any city street in Italy, schoolboys wearing black aprons like Nelli's, or glazed caps like Franti's; and on cold days nearly all, from the poorest street boy to the *signorino*, wear loose cloaks like that under which Garoffi hid his bulging pockets.

From Rome to Turin the satchels and lunch baskets are alike in size and shape. A few years ago the popular satchel was goatskin, with the hair left on. In Rome all the lunch

baskets were bright orange, while in Florence the fashionable color was that of a ripe tomato.

Kindergartens are new in Italy, and there are very few public ones, so I am sure Enrico never saw anything so pretty as the *Giardino d'Infanzia* that I visited in Florence one April morning. Most of the curls and most of the big eyes were black, but, here and there, a yellow head and a pair of blue eyes made me think of home.

One bright, cold January day I visited the largest public school in Rome. We were most courteously received by the director, who piloted us through all the grades to the manual training workroom and to the sunny refectory, where every day a luncheon is served to the poorer children.

We were ushered into one room which, I think, corresponded to Enrico's third grade. A lesson in geography was going on. A tall, thin boy, perhaps ten years old, whose arms were far too long for his sleeves, was reciting: "The-inhabitants - of - the - central - part - of - North - America - have - reddish - skins - high - cheek - bones - and - straight - black - hair."

The teacher came forward and the director said: "Excuse me, Signor L——, I have brought a lady and gentleman from America to visit the class." Forty pairs of big eyes

were turned curiously upon us, but nobody smiled. We begged that the lesson might not be interrupted, and the long-armed boy, in some confusion, picked up his thread and went on: "high - cheek - bones - and - straight - black hair."

As we went about, I thought that American pupils would be quick to complain of the cold in the classrooms and corridors; but when we climbed to the vast, flat roof that makes the playground, I wished that the boys at home might see the wonder of the view on every side. Close at hand, the Colosseum; in another direction, the Forum, the Capitol, and the Palatine Hill; far away, the Tiber and the great dome of St. Peter's. The director told us with pride that some of his boys would already be excellent guides to a stranger in Rome. I could well believe it; for a boy might stand on that terrace in the sunshine and learn the history of three thousand years.



## THE LOVER OF TREES IN ITALY

Your ghost will walk, you lover of trees,  
    (If our loves remain)  
In an English lane,

. . . . .  
Or look for me, old fellow of mine,  
    (If I get my head from out the mouth  
O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,  
And come again to the land of lands)—  
In a sea-side house to the farther South,  
Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,  
And one sharp tree—'tis a cypress—stands,  
By the many hundred years red-rusted,  
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,  
My sentinel to guard the sands  
To the water's edge.

—Browning, *De Gustibus*.

"I cannot understand," said a lover of Switzerland to me, "your content in Italy in the summer. I want depth of shade, and masses of green, and the coolness that comes from ever-green forests. Italy is beautiful, but it is so treeless." I listened, as one who has the taint of Italy in his blood listens to criticism of her, without resentment or jealousy, rather with tolerance and pity for the critic. Yet I suggested that the southern side of the Alps is Italy, not

Switzerland; and I recalled the oaks and walnuts in the valleys and ravines of Umbria, the beeches of a Vallombrosa and the hoary chestnuts of the Pistojesse Apennines, for, even to one who does not know its greatest woods, Italy affords abundant green shadow.

In the spring I made with my devotee of forests a Franciscan pilgrimage into the Casentino. The broad summit of Prato Magno was snow-covered, but the lower slopes of all the mountains were a glory of young oak foliage, too golden to be green, too green to be golden. When we stood among the towering beeches and hemlocks on the height of La Verna, my friend said penitently, "I shall never again think of Italy as treeless."

None the less, next day, as we left the sharp firs of the Consuma Pass and its bleak winds behind us, and drove down toward the sunset glory of the Arno Valley, past fields of rose-colored vetch and wine-dark clover, of bright poppies and pale iris, into a world where acacias in full flower stood white among the cypresses, I reflected that it is not for its forest trees that one loves Italy. When the heart seeks broad oaks or cathedral firs, it is the North that calls, and if, in Italy, the feet of a Northerner stray into some unlooked-for *selva oscura*, he finds himself presently thinking of home. For, in spite of great exceptions, forests of pine, or fir,

or chestnut, the characteristic trees of Italy are detached, sharply outlined, impressive from loneliness and contrast. In groves, in groups, in avenues, in files, in couples and singly, they cut the sky, and it is the general treelessness of the landscape that gives to the infrequent trees their peculiar beauty. They are so defined and individual that one remembers the cypresses of a Tuscan city exactly as one remembers its *campanili*, and it would be as easy to forget the dome of St. Peter's as to forget the single palm tree of St. Bonaventura. I have even seen it from the Pincian Hill on a gray winter day, pale against a paler sky, yet distinct in outline as the convent itself. It looked lonely as a seventeenth-century ghost, keeping uneasy watch between the advance of archaeological excavation and of modern building.

I shall always remember a May morning years ago, when, on the journey from Florence to Rome by way of Arezzo, I made discovery that the attenuated trees of Perugino are real, not fancied. It was my first lesson in the faithfulness of the Umbrian and Tuscan landscape painting. I soon came to know that, so long as the hillsides bear feathery alders and tufted poplars, and almonds pink with bloom in February, so long will the angels of Fra Giovanni and Benozzo Gozzoli flit before one's eyes. Outside the walls of Urbino grow two thin sentinels so alive with

the spirit of Perugino that one half expects to see Our Lady of Sorrows, purple-vested, standing beside them in the fading light with St. Bernard at her feet.

In Italy every tree has its peculiar significance and charm—fig trees, medlars, mulberries, with their garlands of vine, acacias, oaks, walnuts, chestnuts, firs—yet the most characteristic trees that stand along the way of the ordinary traveller seem to me to be the ilex, the olive, the cypress, and the stone-pine.

The ilexes present rather masses of shade than clearness of outline, but this is the impression from the outside. Beneath them, among them, as one becomes used to the dusk, one sees that not even an Italian gardener has been able to prune them of their individuality.

On the Latian hill-sides they belong to the ancient world. They are symbols of Roman myth and of Roman rite, but as one sees them in villa and palace garden they are retainers of the ducal days. Indifferent and uncommunicative to the curious stranger, they, who grew old so long ago, whisper to themselves through the sunny noons of dead lovers whose secrets they have shared, of princely traitors whose crimes they have hidden, and, silent o' nights, they listen for the festival music that used to sound from the bright windows. Though they are wrinkled and lichen-stained, though their hearts

are eaten with decay, they cling to life with the tenacity of sage and subtle *Monsignori*. Their trunks may be built up with stones and cement, as are those of the giants of Castel Gandolfo; their mighty lateral spread may be propped by timbers as in the Boboli Gardens, yet they refuse to "die at the top." In spring the blackest of them all is covered with a faint glory of new green that changes it as a sudden thought of youth changes an old face. The nightingales have sung in its depths through three hundred Junes. They may find green shelter there for a hundred more—who knows.

The ilex is reserved, patrician, but the olive is of the people. It loves broad slopes, where it may fraternize with mulberry and vine, and with the peasant as he ploughs and plants. It chatters to fig tree and medlar across the garden-wall. The sheep and the shepherds are its familiars, and the children who gather its fruit and trim its branches. From root to topmost bough, it is a creature of the sun. The swaying tracery that it casts over red soil or brown sod is tempered sunlight, not shadow. Even the hollow heart of an old olive shows, not decay, but a warm, silvery surface as if the rain and the sun had cleansed and polished it.

The olive, like its peasant neighbor, works till the end. On an Umbrian hillside each broken shell through which the sky looks as through a

ruined arch wears a fringe of fruit-bearing boughs, dancing and shining in the light as if the crown of old age were joy, not sorrow.

I have heard the olive called dull and colorless. Profane lips have even called it dusty and dreary. The charm of it, like that of all soft color, is a matter of combination and contrast. The single tree, if one look at it from the ground, enhances every mass and every touch of vivid color about it; the red poppy at its foot, the green lizard on its trunk, the blue of the sky over it. Or, if the earth be dun and the sky gray, the olive gives delicate values, fine gradations of tone that please the eye as faint-heard harmony pleases the ear.

If this be true of a solitary tree, it is truer of wide orchards in the general landscape. In the large, the effect of the olive is more translucent than opaque. Over the steep slopes of Tuscany, where the trees are small, the color lies like a thin veil. In Umbria, and farther south, it falls from hill to plain in soft waves of a tone that is indescribable because it changes with every mood of the varying sky.

The most marvellous color-effect of the olives that I remember was in the Alban hills, when, between the ranks of trees, the vineyards were vivid green with a hint of gold, and the grass had become actual emerald in the autumn rains. Though standing in the midst of this bright ver-

ture, these Roman olives looked less silvery and more green than those of Tuscany, and I received the same impression from the orchards about Naples.

I instinctively incline to think of olive and cypress as local symbols, the olive Umbrian, the cypress Tuscan. Both trees are wide-scattered over Italy, but the olive is essential to the spirit of the Tiber Valley, and the cypress to that of the Arno.

The eyes that find the olive dusty, have found the cypress mournful and stiff. They have found the early Tuscan and Umbrian painters also stiff and mournful, and it would be futile to argue in defence of either painters or trees. But lie on the sunny side of an old cypress through a mid-summer afternoon and look at it long, till you are alone in the world with it. Below, it is "ripe fruit o'ercrusted," and all a-flutter with singing birds, but the top soars away from you and pierces the sky as no other wingless thing can do. As your eye climbs the green spire, the blue seems to deepen and draw down till you are conscious not so much of infinite distance as of infinite nearness. But, if you chance upon the same cypress standing against the sky at evening, how black and sombre it can be! Withdrawn and austere, as becomes Dante's compatriot, it broods on tragedy. It will not even tell you if the song-birds that flut-



tered about it in the sunshine are hidden in its heart.

Despite their simplicity of outline, the cypresses are not monotonous nor changeless. I know an avenue of ancient trees in an Alban villa. Their vast trunks are cut and seamed and hollowed by the years. Their tops are blasted and broken. They have suffered and resisted through a thousand mountain storms, but, in the failing light of an autumn afternoon, they look weary and frail, as if the moment were near when their enduring mortality must yield to "the unimaginable touch of time." At the end of another road in the same villa there is a tall young cypress that sways with every breath. Slim and green as a martyr's palm, it is, like that, a thing of joy and victory.

The cypresses are companionable and protecting. Two and two at tall gateways, in thin defile along a climbing wall, in close ranks like battalions, they guard the homes of the living, and watch where the dead sleep. Their welcome greets the traveller on each return to "the land of lands," and their farewell follows him when his north-bound train pulls out into the dusk.

Only less beautiful than the cypress, and perhaps equally beloved of Italy's lovers, is the umbrella-pine. It would be hard to say where it is most essential. On the Neapolitan coast, on the Roman Campagna, within the walls of Rome



or on the environing mountains, crowning the cliffs of the Italian Riviera, or covering the plain between Ravenna and Rimini, it is "the joy of the whole earth."

In spite of the ravages of time and fire and frost, the Pineta of Ravenna is lovely still. It takes only feeble imagining to figure it in the days when it skirted the sea. Now the sea is far away, and even the rice-swamps are being converted into firm wheat-bearing soil, yet deep among the pines all the modern life slips away. One walks with Dante

*per la pineta*

*In sul lito di Ciassi,*

or one hears the sorrowful voice of Francesca yearning in the castle of the Malatesta that she might be

*posata dolcemente*

*Su la marina di Ravenna*

As I write, the pines come back to me, picture after picture. I see the tall grove where it was good to lie on a September morning looking off over the Campagna, past Rome to the bright line of the sea, till, over-impressed by manifold beauty and suggestion, I turned back to find rest for eyes and spirit in the tossing boughs and "blue, rejoicing sky."

I remember, on the path to Tusculum, a group of pines that always gave a softening grace to a certain bare, nameless, and dateless tomb. High-

er up, a little forest, like a company of gay guests, stands singing on the scarcely traceable site of a Roman villa. But of all the Alban pines, I shall remember longest one, strong and solitary, that used to watch with me, evening after evening, when I climbed an upland meadow to see the ineffable colors of sunset visit the Sabine Mountains.

## THE ALTARPIECE

### A SKETCH OF RENAISSANCE ITALY

In the choir of the great pilgrimage church of Our Lady the last scaffolding was down. Workmen, pupils, priests, friars, pilgrims, women and children, all the crowd of excited onlookers had departed, and the silence seemed echoing still with the tumult of the day. At the altar of the Virgin, far down the nave, the evening service was ended, and a priest moved about softly extinguishing the tapers.

In the choir the last sunlight fell slantwise from the windows of the dome, fell on the lavish gold of the new frescoes, a gold that seemed to defy the thickening shadows, and to efface the holy lamps.

Up and down before his masterpiece, the Master walked alone. All day he had worked and directed, listened to the chorus of applause, half heard the rare expression of disapproval that fell from some captious critic. Now the remembered praise sang in his heart, but the harsh words were forgotten, for the Master's was a simple nature, and at this moment he was capable of but one emotion, sheer joy in the beauty of the work his hand had wrought.

The light faded, but the Master still could see

the golden-haired women and bright-bearded men whom he had painted in robes of blue and green, and tawny yellow, in a world of rocks and groves, where a bit of water gleamed blue-grey. Gentle faces looked out at him with eyes blue-grey like the water, and lips that half smiled, as if grateful to be alive there in the silence. Serenest of all these faces, yet most wistful and wondering, was that of Our Lady.

With the growing darkness a thought intruded upon the Master's joy, disturbing it as wind and cloud might have disturbed the still back-ground of his fresco. This mood of glad expectation and unformulated dread had come to him many a time of late, but now its cause was imminent and unescapable, for to-morrow the Cardinal's commissioners would come from Rome to inspect the new paintings. From Rome, which was calling one by one the best provincial masters! From Rome whose call meant wealth and fame and immortality! Roman patrons had visited Tuscan, Umbrian, or Venetian cities, and great churches were left half finished, and in many a famous studio only pupils were to be found. The Master felt himself in the full prime of his power, and he longed to spend these his best years in a place that to every painter seemed the heart of the world.

He realized suddenly that he was utterly weary, and that the church was quite dark.

"I must go home," he said aloud, "perhaps Andrea will have come."

He turned reluctantly away, pressing through a door that led into the cloister where Brother Beato stood waiting patiently with torch and keys.

"Good-night, *Caro Maestro*," he said, "one ought to be happy who is a great painter."

"It is hard work, my brother," replied the Master, "but it is good work, God knows."

Brother Beato quenched his torch, and by the soft light that defined the arches they knew that the moon was risen on the world without the cloister.

"When the church is finished," said the Master, "I shall paint my last picture there, at the end of this loggia, paint it as a gift of friendship for the Brotherhood, and, especially for you, my brother. What shall it be? The coronation of Our Lady?"

"When you paint there, Master," answered Brother Beato, "paint Our Lord upon the cross."

At the garden gate a girl was waiting, little Teresita, with whose grandparents the Master had lived since he came a year ago, from a beautiful country like that one saw in his pictures.

"You are late, Master, and you must be very tired," said Teresita, "but you must be proud, so proud and glad! I heard his Highness speaking to my Lord Bishop, this morning, at the door of

the church, and he said 'They cannot match that, Your Excellency, no, not in Rome.' "

The Master did not answer, but he walked less wearily.

"Master," asked the girl timidly, "where is Andrea?"

"He is in the city, *carina mia*, he has not finished the portrait of the Duchess Leonora. I should like him to be here to-morrow when the visitors come from Rome."

Late at night the Master stood in his doorway, whence he could see the dome of Our Lady of Salvation, vast and visionary in the August moonlight. Like an impatient boy he wished the night away; for his dread had been but passing fatigue, whereas his expectation was temperamental and persistent.

In the early morning, while white mist covered the plain, and only the dome of Our Lady of Salvation floated in clear air, the commissioners arrived from Rome. When mass was ended, they stood in the full flood of the mid-day sunshine to inspect the frescoes in the choir, and even the remembered glory of Roman churches and palaces could blind only the most critical among them to the charm of what they had come to see. For the most part, their comment was wholly praise, and under its glow, the Master's tongue was modestly loosed, and he spoke freely of his finished and his projected work. On the

opposite faces of the choir arch were to be pictured the birth and the death of Our Lady, and, if he remained long enough, he would fill transepts and nave with altar pieces in her honor. He spoke proudly of his pupils, their attainments and their promise.

"Look at that figure of a page, and see, that maiden's head, they are the work of my most gifted pupil. He will be a great man your Excellencies; he is but twenty; I have taught him from a child."

Was the lad to be seen? No, he was in the city, in the service of Duke Ridolfo; he was painting a portrait of her young Highness, the Duchess Leonora.

"He must be looked to, Master, he does you credit," said the greatest of the visitors.

That night there was no cloud upon the Master's expectation; he was dizzy with praise and joy. His future was assured, for my Lord the Archbishop had in parting spoken words capable of but one interpretation. If only Andrea would come, the boy of his love! The Master would not talk of his hopes to the other painters; it was like boasting; and the women? Only little Tere-sita could understand. But Andrea, whose fortune was bound with his own, for whom he would surely send as soon as he had received his first commission; the beautiful boy who should astonish the Roman painters and patrons,—why

did not Andrea come that he might hear the parting words of the archbishop?

"*Addio, Maestro,*" he had said in his benign Roman voice, "until we meet in Rome."

Next day Andrea came. The Master stood in his door, waiting for him, fairly wearied with suppressed excitement. In his imperative need for sympathy, he had confided to Teresita something of his hope, and the task of answering her questions had shortened the long day.

"Will you take Andrea, Master, when you go to Rome?"

"We shall see, Little One, who knows? Andrea will be a great painter in Rome some day. It is for Andrea's sake that I am most glad."

The Master smiled at Teresita, but the face that smiled back at him looked white and frightened.

Then Andrea came, not lazily as he was wont, but impetuously, throwing himself upon the Master's neck and kissing him; not even seeing Teresita, whose eyes might have burned him.

"Master, Master, I am bidden to Rome! I am to work in the Vatican! I must go at once, next week, in my Lord the Archbishop's suite.

They came and found me painting; the portrait is almost finished; they say it is stupendous. 'We must have you in Rome,' the archbishop said. O, there was a great scene: they all talked at once, and her Highness fainted in her chair;



she had been sitting very long, and no one noticed that she had turned white.

"Think of it, Master! They want young men, and new fashions. I am to be a great man. Teresita! Monna Giulietta! come and hear the news!"

But they stood close behind the Master, and all three were trembling.

When Andrea was gone to tell his fortune and be fêted by his friends, and Monna Giulietta was gone to boast to Monna Elisebeta of the boy's great fame, the Master went away also, quietly, and only Teresita noticed that he took the road to the church. Two hours later he came home, and Teresita met him at the garden-gate, with troubled eyes:

"When Andrea goes to Rome, shall you go also, Maestro?"

"No, child," he answered gently, "I have my church to finish; there are many histories yet to paint of the life of Our Lady."

He stood a long time, silent as the after-sunset mist that was rising between them and the church, but when he spoke it was as if he completed an unbroken sentence: "and in the cloister I must paint for Brother Beato a picture of Our Lord upon the cross."

\* \* \* \*

On the facing panels of the choir arch the Master painted the birth and the death of the Virgin,

giving to figures and to the scenes that joyous tenderness and tender pathos which he learned from no teacher and transmitted to no pupil. One more picture he made for the church, but its relation to his finished frescoes and to his unfinished series was hard to trace. It was an altarpiece in oils, painted in the obscurity of his make-shift studio; no pupil worked upon it, and no eyes saw it save the dim ones of Monna Giulietta, who wondered vaguely, and the clear ones of Teresita, who understood.

When on a bright morning of April the picture was placed above the altar in a dark chapel of the nave, it excited a whirlwind of local comment, praise and questioning, but no one came from Rome because of it. The new altarpiece represented the baptism of Christ. Grouping and scene belonged to the familiar tradition; color and light to the Master's customary manner, but the thrill that ran through the crowd of observers, and grew into wondering ejaculations, was one of unmistakable recognition; for the beautiful, youthful, almost beardless face of Jesus was the face of Andrea, the Baptist's that of the Master himself.

## THE EIGHTH OF DECEMBER

The Church of the Gesù was decked and thronged for the festival of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady. It was sermon-time, and, with a great rattle of chairs, the congregation had turned toward the pulpit, where a famous Jesuit was mounting the steps.

My seat was so placed that I could look up and down the church, from the end of the nave to the high altar. I could even peer into the left transept, where the silver-gilt figure of St. Ignatius, uncovered for this festa-day, glimmered faintly through the shadows. As I looked, I was aware of a tall woman with a purple shawl over her head, who stood at the angle of transept and nave. Her back was toward the pulpit, and she gazed fixedly at the high altar, whose great crucifix had given place to a statue of the Madonna, pink-cheeked and golden-haired and robed in crisp blue and rose-color.

The congregation was, like most Roman assemblies, curiously cosmopolitan. There were tourists and "converts" from Germany, England, and America, and seminarists from every nation under heaven. Among a group of students from the College of the Propaganda who were kneeling in front of me, was a negro youth with a

round black face, fantastically resembling that of the Third King in Albrecht Dürer's "Adoration". Close beside me sat a woman of the people, a little, bent grandmother with a red-aproned baby in her lap. She seemed not to hear the preacher, but she said her prayers devoutly, while the baby's sleepy fingers played with the beads and cross of her rosary.

The preacher spoke eloquently and at length of the Church's age-long worship of the Blessed Virgin, the enthroned and holy Lady, Queen of Earth and Heaven.

Far up in the baroque roof, little lights began to show unsteadily, as a long white wand, like a flame-tipped finger, felt patiently for candle after candle. Up and down the nave, in the transepts, in the apse, other silent, white fingers reached forth, wavered about in the dusk and moved on, leaving clusters of lights in great spaces of darkness.

In the left transept, the figure of St. Ignatius gleamed brighter, and the gold rim of the lapis-lazuli globe above his head reflected the soft glow. As the swinging lamps surrounding the high altar were lowered, lighted, and slowly lifted into place, the pink and blue Madonna looked gayer than ever.

"Blessèd among women! Adored of all the church of God! Queen of Heaven!" exclaimed the preacher. Some one near me sighed heavily.

I turned and saw behind my chair the tall woman in the purple shawl. Her great eyes looked sad, or puzzled, and I thought that she swayed, as if from weariness. "Will you take my chair, Madam?" I asked: "I am going out." She did not hear me, but glided swiftly down the nave, and I followed her, surprised that we moved so easily through the crowd.

As we reached the door, the preacher ceased, and the vast congregation rose suddenly, and cried: "*Evviva Maria! Madre di Dio! Regina del Cielo!*"

The woman paused with her hand on the leather curtain and looked back. Her eyes were frightened and her mouth quivered. I raised the curtain, and we passed under it, into the twilight. I did not know why I followed her, nor whither. Through many dark streets we reached the river, and climbed narrow winding ways beyond, until at the top of a steep, unpaved road, the woman paused at a small gateway in a high, stuccoed wall. The gate stood ajar. She pushed it open and entered, I following as closely as I dared.

Darkness had fallen, but I could discern a garden set with olives and cypresses. The garden was like a hundred others, yet, as I looked up through the olive branches, the sky and stars seemed strange.

The woman disappeared in the dense shadow of a cypress path, and I pursued blindly, listening

in vain for the sound of her feet upon the gravel.

The path opened at length into a bit of lawn, and there I saw her, seated on a stone bench beside a silent fountain. Her face was buried in her lap, and she drew long, broken breaths, as if in pain. A warm south wind, sweet with the breath of December roses, drifted across the open, and whispered in the cypress trees.

As I watched, a man came out from the farther shadow, and stood before the woman's knees. He laid his hand upon the bowed head, and his voice was like the voice of the south wind. "I would that I might comfort thee, my mother." And the woman answered piteously: "Yea, son, thou art my comfort, for thou art truly as a son to me; but the years grow long, and I am old. Thou sayest that he will come again in glory, but my heart cries out that he might come, once more, a child into these empty arms. Ay, even; may God forgive me! I would put by the hope of his returning, if I might hold his beloved head upon my knees, and close his dead eyes softly with my lips. The old priest spoke truly: 'The sword shall pierce through thine own soul also,' for she who was most blessed among women, is she whom God hath most afflicted."

"Nay, mother," said the man, but I heard no more, for his voice changed into the voice of a great organ, and a thousand lights trembled before my eyes. I saw again the gorgeous church

of the Gesù. The gay Madonna smiled down from the high altar. About her rose an arch of swinging lights. Above her head, pricked out in yellow gas-jets, blazed the words: *Salve Maria Regina*. The mass-bell tinkled, and the priest lifted the host before the kneeling multitude. The man who looked like the Third King bowed his dark face to the ground. The poor grandmother knelt upon the pavement, striving to teach the sleepy baby to kneel upon her chair. She folded his limp little hands together, and I heard her whisper: “*‘Maria, Madre di Dio e Madre di misericordia, pregate per noi.’*” I looked across the left transept. The silver-gilt figure of St. Ignatius was all aglow, but the tall woman in the purple shawl was nowhere to be seen.

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